

Connected Lane County Beginning Teacher and Administrator Mentoring Program



Mentoring in Action: Randy Blake and Harry Holton, Siuslaw High School

There is a sanctuary unlike any other at Florence's Siuslaw High School. Walk down the noisy hallway overflowing with students. Near the end there is a door. Open it. During this particular second period – beginning teacher Travis Blake's prep - I am greeted by a blast of cold coastal air, a yawning quiet, and the heavy, metallic smell of machinery. Sunlight streams through the

open garage door, illuminating the cavernous space. Machines, car and boat parts of all sorts crowd each other for space in the large shop. The quiet is an anomaly. Usually, this shop is a din of activity, with the hum, thump and whirr of tools keeping tune to students' voices. In the middle of the room, a student stands under a car on lifts. He watches the oil drain from the car above, pooling in a pan at eye level. This year, almost 25 percent of SHS students will participate in the Auto and Metals program.

Years ago, these hands-on programs- metals, tech, consumer material, etc,- were known as a safe haven for students who didn't do well with the "traditional" curriculum. Today, these career and technical education (CTE) program provide students with meaningful hands-on academic and career-driven programs that allow students to immediately apply their learning to real-world situations. Students in Travis' classes fix cars and boats both old and new, manufacture parts and build items for the district and its students. Just recently, when teachers noticed that one students' wheelchair didn't fit under conventional desks, students in the Auto and Metals program built seven desks – one for each classroom – to accommodate this student's learning needs. Students in this program can leave with both skills and certificates for employment, as well as college credit and high interest in the trades, thus allowing them a seamless stream from high school to careers, technical schools and community college. And lest you think this program is just for the boys, think again. Fully 20 percent of Travis' students are girls!

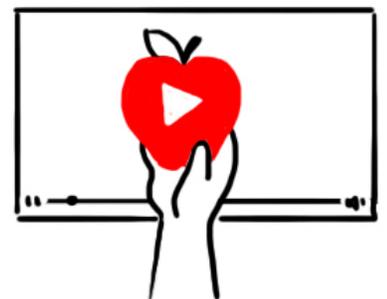
Twenty-six years ago, mentor Harry Holton, newly arrived at SHS, had a vision. He wanted to resurrect the auto shop program at SHS. Complex, expensive machinery and tools languished in the school. Over the years, Harry built a stellar program; when he retired, he wanted to insure that SHS students continue to have powerful hands-on technical learning experiences. Along came Travis. With the addition of marine mechanics and manufacturing to the program, Travis is building his passions into the curriculum, creating new learning and career paths for coastal students. While he's into his second year of retirement, Harry continues to spend many of his days in the shop with Travis and his students. Their bond is special, marked by quiet humor, smiles and a serious commitment to creating powerful learning opportunities for students.

Travis and Harry are part of a unique mentoring program. Mentoring has been proven to retain teachers, as well as increase their sense of self-efficacy, their belief in their ability to succeed.

Eyes on This: YouTube and Web Videos for Teaching and Learning

Lately, we've been combing the web for really cool video resources – sites that have ready-to-go videos and teaching tools. While there are countless YouTube and other sites to explore, here are some of our new favorites:

- [Ted-Ed](#) – TED's newest educational initiative. Thousands of TED lessons with learning and assessment tools included, developed by educators. These lessons can be used as is, adapted, or create your own lesson using TED talks or any YouTube video.
- [Veritasium](#) is a YouTube science video blog featuring experiments, expert interviews, cool demos, and discussions with the public about everything science.
- [Minute Physics](#) – "Simply put: cool physics and other sweet science." Uses mostly illustration and cartoon for explanation.
- [The Spangler Effect](#) spares no detail in finding the drama, zap, pow and zing in science. These unconventional, creative videos make for fun learning.
- [Smarter Every Day](#) is another science YouTube channel; this one is a bit quirky. Videos range from the science of beatboxing to the physics of cat-flipping.
- [Numberphile](#) supported by the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, Numberphile's videos take on everything mathematical from fractiles and "boring numbers" to dice challenges and Hippocates.



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Teacher Travis, center left, and mentor Harry, with students



As 40-50 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching, several years ago the state began to allocate grant funds to providing trained mentors to beginning teachers and administrators. This high teacher turnover not only drains schools' limited financial resources, it also hinders our ability to close achievement gaps. Siuslaw is one of 11 school districts in

Lane County that participate in this program, which is run by the Lane ESD.

Asked about what the mentor program means to him, Travis responds "It means everything to have Harry as my mentor. He's been the backbone of this program, and there's no way I could have made it this far without him. I've learned more from Harry in a half year than most people can learn in a lifetime. He's always there for me, day, night, weekends, ready to answer any questions, help me through things. I can't say enough about him."

In addition to providing mentors, the mentor program supports beginning teachers to visit veterans in their classrooms. A few weeks ago, Travis and Harry spent the day with teachers at Springfield and Thurston high schools, visiting auto shop, metals, drawing, robotics and wood shop classes.

"It was really neat to be able to get out and watch other teachers teach...I learned great set up, a bunch of ideas about classroom organization, and how to run the kids through a class. Seeing other teachers is also great for idea-building and keeping up with the industry."

Travis still owns and runs a commercial boat-building business. Inspired by Thurston's program, he is hoping to get a 3-D printer for his students next year.

"My mentor teacher has been a significant sources of support through my first year teaching. I value her ideas, opinions, and her classroom teaching. I feel comfortable coming to her for anything, and she makes me feel as though I am a colleague and not a first year teacher." – Beginning Teacher

- [CGP Grey](#) creates videos on YouTube that illustrate "complex things." The Lord of the Rings Mythology Explained, Quick and Easy Voting for Normal People and the American Empire are just a few of the topics Grey takes on.
- Visit [artist-mathematician Victoria Hart](#) for a fascinating, creative take on math in music, the arts, and other places you might not ordinarily think of.
- [CrashCourse's](#) YouTube channel offers fun, fast-paced and creative 10-1 minute episodes of educational content across a variety of disciplines – think US and world history, literature, psychology and anatomy to name a few. I checked out a few – each knocked my socks off. I love "[How and Why We Read](#)."
- [VSauce](#) asks and answers all kinds of interesting questions about how things work, and why. Are all things fair in love and war? Could the Kool-Aid man break through a wall? Will we ever visit other stars? Visit this site to find the answer to these and other fantastic questions.
- On PBS's [Idea Channel](#) your students can learn why we love zombies, or grapple with the ethics of artificial intelligence. Links on the bottom of the page will take you to PBS kids, or check out the [Idea Channel's YouTube station](#).
- [Vice's](#) hard hitting journalism digs deep into modern culture and current events. Content more appropriate for high school students.

(Note: As with any resource, it's important to preview the entire video for appropriateness and level before screening.)

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Mentoring for Equity

In March, we asked mentors to review the equity goals they developed for themselves and their classes. Here are some of the goals mentors shared with us:

- *"With my mentee, I want to get to know HER cultural background better, in order to learn what might affect her teaching."*
- *"My goal for my mentee is to help him be more aware of the diversity in his classroom when it may seem to be pretty homogenous."*
- *"I will develop curriculum that teaches my students about cultural experiences and perspectives outside the mainstream."*
- *"We will do the equity checklist together and compare our areas for growth."*

We found this [Self Evaluation tool from Teaching Tolerance](#). We think it's a great tool mentors could use with their beginning teachers and reviewing their own practice.

"Every day, educators make judgments and decisions about students' academic potential, classroom success and ability to be positive members of the school community. The aim of this tool is to get you thinking about the factors that contribute to your perceptions and judgments." (Teacher Perception Tool)



Educational researcher Carol Dweck, writes about [mind sets and equitable education](#). In this easily accessible article, Dweck looks at the interplay of growth mind-sets, bias, stereotypes, and student achievement.

The Data Corner

This year's Connected Lane County mentoring grant serves 105 beginning teachers and 10 beginning administrators-- including two beginning superintendents—across 11 districts. This year, we also trained mentors and provided support to South Lane's mentor grant, which serves South Lane, North Roseburg, Crow-Applegate-Lorane and Pleasant Hill school districts. After discussion with our superintendents, we agreed that welcoming these new partners to our '15-16 grant application will strengthen our program's application, as well as allow us to continue support for the many expanding Lane County initiatives, including Smarter Balanced Math, Skillful Teacher, literacy, SIOP, and GLAAD to name a few.

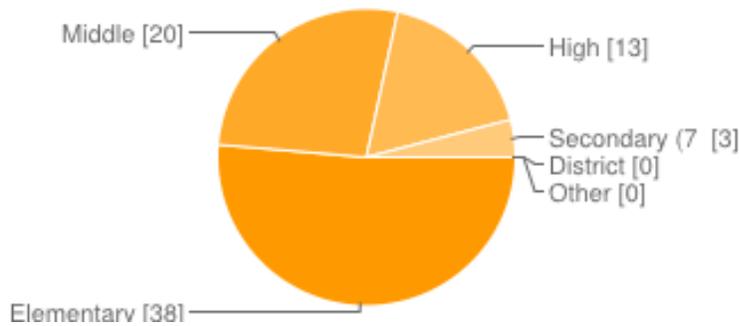
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As part of our on-going assessments, we surveyed mentor program participants in January. Below are beginning teachers' mid-year thoughts about the mentor program.

Responses from beginning teachers (mentees): mid-year survey:

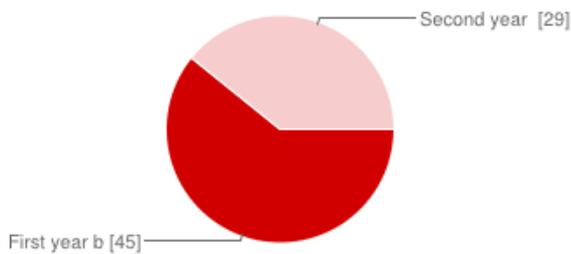
Seventy-four (71 percent) of mentees responded.

What level do you teach?



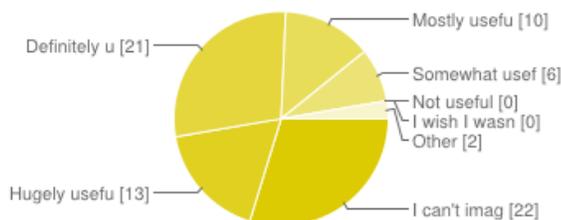
Elementary	38	51%
Middle	20	27%
High	13	18%
Secondary (7 - 12)	3	4%
District	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Is this your...



First year being mentored through this program	45	61%
Second year being mentored through this program	29	39%

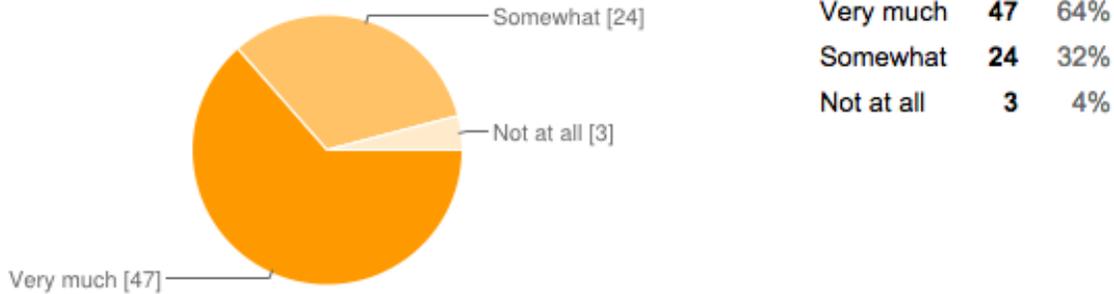
How useful is the time you spend with your mentor?



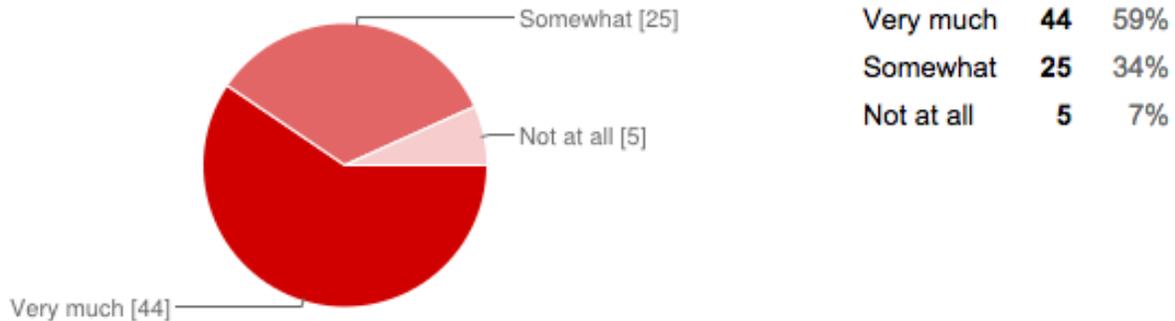
I can't imagine going through the year without his/her support	22	30%
Hugely useful	13	18%
Definitely useful	21	28%
Mostly useful	10	14%
Somewhat useful	6	8%
Not useful	0	0%
I wish I wasn't in this program	0	0%
Other	2	3%

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How much is this program/your mentor positively impacting your instructional abilities?



How much is this program positively impacting your sense of success this year?



Which of the following professional development topics are of interest to you?

